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which resembled the starling of the old country in its habits, and to a certain extent also in its form, and to this they easily transferred the name of the well-known inhabitant of the home they had left behind them.

In colour, however, the American starling (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) is very different from its European namesake, and, in fact, the male and female are so very distinct in appearance, that they would never be taken for the two sexes of the same bird by any one unacquainted with their habits. The male is of a beautiful glossy black, with the shoulders scarlet; the female is brownish black above, mottled and streaked with brown or white; the head has two stripes of cream colour on each side over the eye; and the lower surface is of a whitish cream colour, streaked and spotted with black. The male measures about nine inches in length, the female a little more than seven. In colour the young male bird greatly resembles the female, but soon begins to show indications of belonging to the superior sex in the reddish markings of his shoulders, a distinction of which the females are always destitute.

This bird is found over a great range of country; extending from Mexico in the south to Labrador in the north; in the northern states it appears to be a migratory bird, but in the southern parts of the Union it remains all the year round. In these states the starlings collect during the winter in immense flocks, frequenting the old rice and corn-fields, where they contrive to glean an abundant supply of nutritious food. During the spring and summer their food generally consists of grubs, caterpillars, and other insects, for which they search with the greatest diligence in every direction. Wilson, our great ornithologist, who has devoted considerable space to an attempt to justify this bird from the aspersions which have been cast upon his character, well observes, that these insects are "the silent, but deadly enemies of all vegetation, whose secret and insidious attacks are more to be dreaded by the husbandman than the combined forces of the whole feathered tribes together." Hence he considers that the starlings, by destroying these pests, do far more service to the agriculturist than would compensate for any damage they may do him in other respects, for unfortunately, it cannot be denied that the stigma upon their character is but too well founded. For their principal attacks upon the farmer's property the starlings select the months of August and September, when the ears of the Indian corn are young, soft, and succulent, and present a temptation too great to be resisted. "At this time," says Wilson, "reinforced by numerous and daily flocks from all parts of the interior, they pour down on the low countries in prodigious multitudes. Here they are seen, like vast clouds, wheeling and driving over the meadows and devoted corn-fields, darkening the air with their numbers. Then commences the work of destruction on the corn, the husks of which, though composed of numerous envelopments of closely-wrapt leaves, are soon completely or partially torn off; while from all quarters myriads continue to pour down like a tempest, blackening half an acre at a time; and, if not disturbed, repeat their depredations till little remains but the cob and the shrivelled skins of the grain. What little is left of the tender ear, being exposed to the rains and weather, is generally much injured." Truly, we cannot much wonder at the existence of a prejudice against these birds; or that the damage done, which forces itself very strongly upon the observation, should considerably outweigh, in the minds of the agriculturist, the hidden benefits which the philosopher tells him he receives in another way from the plunderers.

In the air the red-winged starlings present a beautiful appearance: Wilson, who observed them in Virginia when collected into their winter flocks in the months of January and February, tells us that they frequently entertained him with their "aërial evolutions." "Sometimes," he says, "they appeared driving about like an enormous black cloud carried before the wind, varying its shape every moment. Sometimes suddenly rising from the fields around me with a noise like thunder; while the glittering of innumerable wings of the brightest vermillion amid the black cloud they formed, produced on these occasions a very striking and splendid effect. Then descending like a torrent, and covering the branches of some detached grove, or clump of trees, the whole congregated multitude commenced one general concert or chorus, that I have plainly distinguished at the distance of more than two miles; and, when

listened to at the intermediate space of about a quarter of a mile, with a slight breeze of wind to swell and soften the flow of its cadences, was to me grand, and even sublime." The elements of this song, as described by our author, do not, however, appear to have anything very attractive about them. He says that "when taken alive, or reared from the nest, it soon becomes familiar, and sings frequently, bristling out its feathers. These notes, though not remarkably various, are very peculiar. The most common one resembles the syllables *conk-quar-ree*; others, the shrill sounds produced by filing a saw; some are more guttural; and others remarkably clear. The most usual note of both male and female is a single *chuck*." In some instances the red-winged starling, like his European representative, has been taught to articulate words pretty distinctly.

These birds pair about the middle of April, and build their nests at the end of that month or the beginning of May. For this purpose they generally select a tuft of bushes in a marshy or swampy situation, where they build at a height of six or seven feet from the ground. The outside of the nest is formed of rushes and long grass picked from the swamp; it is lined with finer materials. The female lays about five eggs of a very pale blue colour, slightly tinged here and there with purple, and marked with lines and spots of black. "During the time the female is sitting," says the author from whom we have already quoted, and whose work on the birds of this country leaves nothing to be desired, "and still more particularly after the young are hatched, the male, like most other birds that build in low situations, exhibits the most violent symptoms of apprehension and alarm on the approach of any person to its near neighbourhood. Like the lapwing of Europe, he flies to meet the intruder, hovers at a short height over-head, uttering loud notes of distress; and while in this situation, displays to great advantage the rich glowing scarlet of his wings, heightened by the jetty black of his general plumage. As the danger increases, his cries become more shrill and incessant, and his motions rapid and restless; the whole meadow is alarmed, and a collected crowd of his fellows hover around, and mingle their notes of alarm and agitation with his. When the young are taken away, or destroyed, he continues for several days near the place, restless and dejected, and generally recommences building soon after in the same meadow."

A BULL-FIGHT IN LISBON.

Few popular sports are more popular in the Spanish peninsula than the bull-fight. To witness a bull-fight, all classes of people, from queen to beggar-girl; and from prince to peasant, will neglect their proper business, and crowd delighted into the amphitheatre. But, alas for the chivalry of Portugal! the bull-fight no longer exists as it does in Spain—pity the sport exists at all! To be sure, cruelty to the beasts has by no means ceased, but nearly all danger to the fighters has! Sorely disappointed were we on one occasion, when, seated as spectators at the feats of the arena in Lisbon, to discover that there was not the slightest possibility of witnessing a death, even of a bull! We had nerv'd ourselves for some awful catastrophe, as we thought, by endeavouring to subdue all the finer feelings of humanity; but we doubt our success, for we were exceedingly disgusted with what we did see. Perhaps, however, if there had been more courage and less cruelty displayed, we might have felt differently. We know that on similar occasions we had previously been very much excited, and cried "Vira!" for a victorious bull as loudly as anybody. But those were fights in which Spaniards were engaged, who laugh to scorn the cowardly, barbarous bull-fighters of Portugal.

At the southern extremity of the *Campo de Santa Anna*, Lisbon, stands the *Praga dos Touros*, bull-circus. This is a wooden edifice, and was built in the time of Don Miguel. It is said to be nearly as large as the circus at Cadiz, and is fitted up with some five hundred boxes, capable of containing eight or ten thousand spectators. It is destitute of neatness and elegance, and was, when we saw it, in a bad state of preservation. Along the highest rows of benches it is inappropriately ornamented with a series of trophies, vases, and obelisks, all made of wood. Every Sunday and fête-day, the proprietors give the public a performance, which is duly announced in some such fustian as follows:—

"This day will be given, in the elegantly-built and delightful *Praço do Campo Santa Anna*, a wonderful and highly-amusing combat of thirteen ferocious and monstrous bulls, to which the respectable public of this renowned capital is invited. The proprietors, ever anxious to gratify the expectations of the magnanimous and distinguished nation of Portugal, so generous in its patronage of these spectacles, feel the greatest satisfaction in being able to announce that they have spared neither trouble nor expense in order to secure the above-mentioned animals, which belonged to the richest proprietor of *Riba Tejo*, who possesses among his herds the most robust and the bravest of bulls. This gentleman has consented to send them to the circus, to assist in the representation that will be given this afternoon." Here follows an eulogium on the coolness and unrivalled agility of the bull-fighters; and after eight lyric stanzas extolling the ferocity of the animals—the bulls, not the fighters—the terrible force of their horns, and a thousand other dangers of the combat, the whole announcement winds up with a description of some marvellous fireworks that will conclude the entertainment.

In spite, however, of grandiloquent announcements, strangers having the spirit of genuine *campinos* are always greatly disappointed. The combat unto death, both of man and beast, was abolished in the time of Mary I., 1777 or 1778; and this diversion has lost its most horrid interest and its shuddering attractions.

These fights open, as in Spain, with a grand display on horseback. When the court is present, an equerry of the royal household acts as *cavalheiro*, and then the best horses from the royal stables are in attendance. Mounted upon one of them, the equerry performs the steps and evolutions of the old Spanish horsemanship, at the same time saluting the court and the public; all of which is termed *cortezias do cavalheiro*. The bull then bounds forth, and is received by the knight, when the more daring among the flag-bearers immediately begin to annoy him with their goads and gaudy capes. Some of the mantle-bearers display great dexterity; but they are in general awkward and timid, though the danger is not great, seeing that the animals have their horns sheathed in leather and tipped with balls. When the bull lacks bravery, or is greatly fatigued, affording little interest in the combat, *Gallegos* (peasants from the province of Galicia, Spain) or negroes are sent against it, who render a service very similar to that of the dogs which the Spanish people clamor for, with the well-known cry of "*Perros!*" whenever the bull seems to be too tame. These *Gallegos* take part in all the Portuguese bull-fights. They make their appearance in round hats and quilted hides, and carry long, two-pronged forks, whence they are called *homens de forcado*, men of the fork. Their place is beneath the royal tribune, where they are formed in

line; and when the bull approaches that vicinity, they receive him on the points of their weapons. Near them may be seen a species of aide-de-camp, mounted, and clad in the old Spanish garb, short cape and hat of plumes. His office is to transmit orders to all parts of the circus from the authorities.

When a bull evinces cowardice or exhaustion, the *Gallegos*, at a given signal, cast their forks aside, and rush upon him. The most courageous, placing himself in front of the animal, seizes the moment when, with lowered head and closed eyes, he is running at him, to leap between his horns, to which he clings firmly, allowing himself to be violently tossed and flung about. The rest then throw themselves upon the brute, securing him by the legs, horns, and tail, and even jumping upon him, until the poor beast, who sometimes draws a dozen of them round the ring three or four times, is compelled to stop. This is termed, not "taking the bull by the horns," but *seizing the bull by the hoof*, and appears to afford the greatest delight, especially to the lower classes of the spectators; hence, at this moment, the plaudits are most enthusiastic. A number of bullocks and cows with bells round their necks now enter, which the subdued bull peacefully follows out of the circle at a trot. His wounds are then dressed, and he is either sent home or reserved for another occasion.

The negroes, it seems, appear but seldom, and it would be well for humanity if they were entirely excluded; for they are called upon to perform feats which none of the *gentlemen* fighters dare attempt. These poor wretches hire themselves out, for the value of a few shillings, to provoke the bull when he is too tame and cowardly. For this purpose they ornament their heads with feathers, in imitation of the savage chiefs of Africa, and conceal themselves either in figures of horses made of pasteboard, called *cavallinhos de pasta*, or in large hampers. The bull is sure to throw them down, and often maims and bruises them in the most shocking manner. We saw one poor old fellow gored through a hamper, to the infinite delight and amusement of the audience; nobody appearing to relish the joke more than the ladies, by whom the front seats of nearly all the boxes were filled. Sometimes these miserable blacks are forced, by the cries of the populace and the orders of the directors, to re-appear in the arena, even while suffering from severe contusions; and loss of limbs is the probable result of this base and dastardly inhumanity.

Before the close of this most refined and delectable exhibition with fire-works, we have another display of horsemanship and horse-dancing, when *viras* resound from all sides, and flowers, money, and sometimes jewels, are showered down upon the heroes of the ring who have that day most distinguished themselves in encounters with blunt-horned bulls.

THE ASSYRIAN BAS-RELIEFS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

HAVING in a former volume* given a general account of Mr. Layard's researches at Nineveh, and a sketch of the ancient history of that long-buried city, it is only necessary in the present article to describe the subjects of the illustrations with which we now present the reader. On returning to the scene of his former labours in 1849, Mr. Layard's first visit was to the excavations which had been made at Kouyunjik, during his absence, under the direction of Mr. Ross. The walls of two chambers had been exposed, but of the long series of bas-reliefs which covered them the greater part had been defaced by the flames which destroyed the palace. Some passages had been excavated, into which Mr. Layard descended, and explored the great hall, the bas-reliefs of which had also suffered greatly from the fire. "In this series of bas-reliefs," says he, "the history of an Assyrian conquest was more fully portrayed than in any other yet discovered, from the going out of the monarch to battle, to his triumphal return after a complete victory." The king, with his war-chariots and horsemen, appears to have passed through a mountainous and wooded country, the physical characteristics of which seem to indicate Armenia or Kurdistan, regions

which we know were invaded by the royal builder of the palace. In some of the bas-reliefs, the Assyrians are represented in close combat with the enemy, who appear to be defeated and overthrown. The Assyrian warriors are armed with spears and bows, both of which weapons they use at full speed; the enemy appear to be all archers. In other compartments the enemy are retreating, pursued by the victorious Assyrians, who thrust them through with their spears, and trample them beneath the feet of their war-horses. The campaign appears to have been successful; for the triumph of the conqueror follows, in which he is represented in his chariot, beneath the royal parasol—the emblem of regality all over Southern Asia—attended by dismounted cavalry soldiers, holding noble horses, richly caparisoned, and infantry, armed and accoutred in various ways. Seated in state, and surrounded by all the outward evidences of power, the Assyrian conqueror receives the captives, the spoil, and the heads of the slain. His soldiers are seen throwing these ghastly trophies of victory into heaps, while officers record the number in their tablets. This barbarous custom still prevails in Persia, and did, until a recent period, in Turkey also; but in the latter country it is now forbidden by a special firman of the present Sultan. In other compartments soldiers are dragging after them, or driving before them, the prisoners, among whom are